

Glenn's Guidelines for Creative Research Projects for the MA, MPhil, or PhD in English

These guidelines are to assist students in understanding my requirements as to the methodology and structure of research-creation projects under my supervision. They do not necessarily reflect the requirements or expectations of other faculty members in our department.

Students who may wish to pursue a Creative Research approach that meets the guidelines below, and believe I may have the disciplinary expertise to support the project, are encouraged to get in touch with me to discuss the possibility further.

1. Creative Research must satisfy the same standards for research practice, research contribution, and critical analysis that we require from traditional methods as appropriate to each of our graduate English degrees.

Creative Research here names the integration of creative arts practices traditionally distinct from the study of English literature (such as creative writing in various media or other areas of the fine arts) with literary research practices appropriate to the advanced-level scholarship expectations of our MA, MPhil, or PhD degrees. While creative writing is the obvious, adjacent practice, in principle any creative practice might be valid in this methodology.

Creative Research in the context of our disciplinary degree programs is more narrowly defined than, and a subset of, what SSHRC recognizes as “research-creation” for the purposes of funding eligibility. This is because SSHRC does not define research-creation according to any disciplinary expectations, only professional research expectations:

“An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms).”*

For example, a SSHRC-approved research-creation project that promised to study the paleontology of extinct whales in Ontario and to write a novel from a whale’s point of view, might satisfy the requirements of an MSC but not those of an MFA, or vice versa, or both, depending on the disciplinary expertise and contribution expected from it. But the same project, in my view, would not satisfy the requirements of an MA in English, because it does not substantially engage with and contribute new knowledge in English as a discipline. Research-creation in English must do the latter, and so represents a narrower set of “what counts” than provided by the SSHRC definition. What counts as research-creation *in a particular degree program* will depend on the disciplinary aims of that degree and program.

Note that since English and literary studies have always drawn substantially from humanities and social sciences, and with considerable overlap with cultural studies, what counts as

disciplinary, literary research cannot be too rigidly defined; yet there should be clear evidence that a proposed Creative Research project addresses its discipline's scholarly community.

2. Creative Research may pursue different methodologies.

Canadian scholars, Chapman and Sawchuk[†] nicely distinguish four alternative modes of research-creation:

- i. **Creative presentations of research:** the results of a traditional research methodology are disseminated in a creative work (e.g. the results of a study of racial representation in 1970s Canadian theatre are expressed in a metafictional play about mounting a play from that period).
- ii. **Research-for-creation:** a traditional research methodology provides the resources for a planned creative work (e.g. a study of gender relations and alternate versions in English folk ballads provides the basis for the writing of a contemporary ballad and its variations).
- iii. **Research-from-creation:** a creative work generates the research data for a traditional research product like a scholarly article or book (e.g. the writing of a novel becomes the basis for a subsequent critical analysis of the novel by its author-scholar).
- iv. **Creation-as-research:** a creative work is designed so that its practice in itself produces research analysis and results (this is the most challenging to imagine, but e.g., it could involve collaborative or community-based research whose results emerge in part from creative activity; or it could involve creative writing that self-reflexively analyzes the limits and possibilities of its own generic or grammatical expression of a topic).

Where a Creative Research project comprises two or more main texts, a rule of thumb may be that at least one third of the whole, and likely more depending on the project, be devoted to traditional academic writing. Note that the most common format for a Creative Research dissertation is the "portfolio" format, in which a collection of inter-related work, rather than a single, linear argument, are presented as the thesis.

* Definitions of Terms, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, <https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22>

[†] Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances'." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37 (2012): 5-26.